



By: TA | AP Brief

# Big losses for Starmer's Labour Party in local elections



Partial results Friday from **local elections** in England showed big losses for Prime Minister Keir Starmer's governing Labour Party and gains for the hard-right party Reform U.K.

The votes are being widely seen as an **unofficial referendum** on Starmer, whose popularity has plummeted since he was elected less than two years ago.

Reform UK, led by **Nigel Farage**, won hundreds of local council seats in working-class areas in England's north such as Hartlepool that once were solid Labour turf.

The picture will change throughout Friday as results come in from the majority of local councils, including Labour strongholds like London.

Votes will also be counted in contests for semiautonomous parliaments in Scotland and Wales.

Farage said the results marked "an historic change in British politics."

A Labour rout could trigger moves by restive party lawmakers to oust a leader who **led them to power** in July 2024.

Even if Starmer survives for now, many analysts doubt he will lead the party into the next national election, which must be held by 2029.

Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy cautioned the party not to topple the prime minister, saying "you don't change the pilot during the flight."

The **Green Party** also hoped to increase its vote share and win hundreds of council seats in urban centers and university towns.

The results reflect a fragmentation of British politics after decades of domination by Labour and the Conservatives.

The Conservative Party is also expected to lose ground, with the centrist Liberal Democrats making some gains.

Reform UK, running on an anti-establishment, anti-immigration message, also is eyeing breakthroughs in Scotland and Wales, though pro-independence nationalists the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru are more likely to form governments in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

## Britain is entering a new political era

John Curtice, professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde, said Britain is entering a new political era where "none of the parties are very big.

"Even Reform are probably not quite at 30% of the vote, so the fracturing of British politics is underlined by these results," he told the BBC.

Starmer's popularity has plunged after **repeated missteps** and U-turns on policies such as welfare reform.

His government has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair **tattered public services** and ease the cost of living — tasks made harder by the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran, which has choked off oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.

### Starmer could face pressure from the party to set a timetable for his departure after an orderly leadership contest

The prime minister has been further hurt by his disastrous decision to appoint **Peter Mandelson**, a scandal-tarnished friend of Jeffrey Epstein, as Britain's ambassador to Washington.

Poor election results could trigger a challenge from a high-profile rival such as Health Secretary Wes Streeting, former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner or Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham.

Alternately, Starmer could face pressure from the party to set a timetable for his departure

after an orderly leadership contest.

“I don’t think Keir Starmer should survive these results,” said Labour lawmaker Jonathan Brash, who represents Hartlepool in Parliament. “We have to be bolder, and we have to go further. And quite frankly, we need new leadership in order to achieve that.”